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ADDRESS OF PRESIDENT WOODROW WILSON UPON REPORTING THE COVENANT AT THE PLENARY SESSION OF THE PEACE CONFERENCE, APRIL 28, 1919.<sup>1</sup>

MR. PRESIDENT: When the text of the covenant of the league of nations was last laid before you I had the honor of reading the covenant in extenso. I will not detain you to-day to read the covenant as it has now been altered, but will merely take the liberty of explaining to you some of the alterations that have been made.

The report of the committee has been circulated. You yourselves have in hand the text of the covenant and will no doubt have noticed that most of the changes that have been made are mere changes of phraseology, no changes of substance, and that, besides that, most of the changes are intended to clarify the document or, rather, to make explicit what we all have assumed was implicit in the document as it was originally presented to you. But I shall take the liberty of calling your attention to the new features, such as they are. Some of them are considerable, the rest trivial.

The first paragraph of article 1 is new. In view of the insertion of the covenant in the peace treaty specific provision as to the signatories of the treaty, who would become members of the league, and also as to neutral states to be invited to accede to the covenant, were obviously necessary. The paragraph also provides for the method by which a neutral state may accede to the covenant.

The third paragraph of article 1 is new, providing for the withdrawal of any member of the league on a notice given of two years.

The second paragraph of article 4 is new, providing for a possible increase in the council should other powers be added to the league of nations whose present accession is not anticipated.

The last two paragraphs of article 4 are new, providing specifically for one vote for each member of the league in the council, which was understood before, and providing also for one representative of each member of the league.

The first paragraph of article 5 is new, expressly incorporating the

<sup>1</sup> Senate Doc. No. 7, 66th Congress, 1st session.

provision as to the unanimity of voting, which was at first taken for granted.

The second paragraph of article 6 has had added to it that a majority of the assembly must approve the appointment of the secretary general.

The first paragraph of article 7 names Geneva as the seat of the league, and is followed by a second paragraph which gives the council power to establish the seat of the league elsewhere should it subsequently deem it necessary.

The third paragraph of article 7 is new, establishing equality of employment of men and women; that is to say, by the league.

The second paragraph of article 13 is new, inasmuch as it undertakes to give instances of disputes which are generally suitable for submission to arbitration, instances of what have latterly been called "justiciable" questions.

The eighth paragraph of article 15 is new. This is the amendment regarding domestic jurisdiction, that where the council finds that a question arising out of an international dispute affects matters which are clearly under the domestic jurisdiction of one or other of the parties, it is to report to that effect and make no recommendation.

The last paragraph of article 16 is new, providing for an expulsion from the league in certain extraordinary circumstances.

Article 21 is new.

The second paragraph of article 22 inserts the words with regard to mandatories, "and who are willing to accept it," thus explicitly introducing the principle that a mandate can not be forced upon a nation unwilling to accept it.

Article 23 is a combination of several former articles and also contains the following: A clause providing for the just treatment of aborigines; a clause looking toward a prevention of the white slave traffic and the traffic in opium; and a clause looking toward progress in international prevention and control of disease.

Article 25 specifically mentions the Red Cross as one of the international organizations which are to connect their work with the work of the league.

Article 26 permits the amendment of the covenant by a majority of the States composing the assembly, instead of three-fourths of the States, though it does not change the requirement in that matter with regard to the vote in the council.

The second paragraph of article 26 is also new and was added at the request of the Brazilian delegation, in order to avoid certain constitutional difficulties. It permits any member of the league to dissent from an amendment, the effect of such dissent being withdrawal from the league.

And the annex is added giving the names of the signatories of the treaty, who become members, and the names of the States invited to accede to the covenant. These are all the changes, I believe, which are of moment.

Mr. President, I take the opportunity to move the following resolutions in order to carry out the provisions of the covenant. You will notice that the covenant provides that the first secretary-general shall be chosen by this conference. It also provides that the first choice of the four member States who are to be added to the five great powers on the council is left to this conference.

I move, therefore, that the first secretary-general of the council shall be the Hon. Sir James Eric Drummond, and, second, that until such time as the assembly shall have selected the first four members of the league to be represented on the council in accordance with article 4 of the covenant, representatives of Belgium, Brazil, Greece, and Spain shall be members; and, third, that the powers to be represented on the council of the league of nations are required to name representatives who shall form a committee of nine to prepare plans for the organization of the league and for the establishment of the seat of the league and to make arrangements and to prepare the agenda for the first meeting of the assembly, this committee to report both to the council and to the assembly of the league.

I think it not necessary to direct your attention to other matters we have previously discussed—the capital significance of this covenant, the hopes which are entertained as to the effect it will have upon steadying the affairs of the world, and the obvious necessity that there should be a concert of the free nations of the world to maintain justice in international relations, the relations between people and between the nations of the world.

If Baron Makino will pardon me for introducing a matter which I absent-mindedly overlooked, it is necessary for me to propose the alteration of several words in the first line of article 5. Let me say that in several parts of the treaty, of which this covenant will form a part, certain duties are assigned to the council of the league of nations.

In some instances it is provided that the action they shall take shall be by a majority vote. It is, therefore, necessary to make the covenant conform with the other portions of the treaty by adding these words. I will read the first line and add the words:

“Except where otherwise expressly provided in this covenant, or by the terms of this treaty, decisions at any meeting of the assembly or of the council shall require the agreement of all the members of the league represented at the meeting.

“Except where otherwise expressly provided in this covenant,” is the present reading, and I move the addition “or by the terms of this treaty.” With that addition, I move the adoption of the covenant.